

Two other members of the Task Force and I visited Hong Kong, Beijing, Shenzhen and Macau between December 13 and December 20 of last year, and our report is effective through December 31 of 1997.

However, nearly all observers agree it is yet "too early to tell" whether Hong Kong will be greatly affected by the transition and/or whether the United States' significant interests in Hong Kong will be adversely affected. From all the perspectives both within and outside of Hong Kong, the very negative scenarios for Hong Kong which many had predicted thus far have not occurred. Undoubtedly, this is in part due to a determined effort by officials from the People's Republic of China to respect Hong Kong's autonomy under the "one-country, two-systems" formula. Despite the fact that the underlying reasons for China's stance remain the same, there is no assurance that the outcome from those objectives will still prevail.

To date, the Hong Kong people seem to enjoy the same basic liberties and rights they enjoyed prior to the reversion. However, this is tempered by the abolition of the Legislative Council and its replacement by a provisional legislature which was "selected," but not elected, by the people of Hong Kong.

Most observers agree that Hong Kong and Beijing officials responsible for implementing the "one-country, two-systems" framework are on their best behavior. Yet one overriding concern remains, and I put that in the form of a question: Are Hong Kong officials subtly anticipating what Beijing desires and not in all instances vigorously pursuing the autonomy that they now have out of a fear that they will upset Beijing? That is the question.

At least with regard to routine matters, Hong Kong governmental officials seem quick to assert their own autonomy. There is also some evidence that Hong Kong officials may be seeking to influence policies on the mainland. But on more sensitive issues such as President Jiang's interaction with protesters in Hong Kong not too long ago, Hong Kong officials may be attempting to put on a good face for Beijing.

If such attempts to "outroyal the queen" are really occurring in Hong Kong, a subtle and seemingly invisible erosion of Hong Kong's economy could be happening without being fully discernible. That is a summary of what we concluded.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to focus briefly on one other aspect of the Hong Kong transition which is of particular importance to America and being watched by this House, and I will say to my colleagues, the full report of this task force, our second quarterly report, will be found in the Extensions of Remarks for today, but that area is Hong Kong's customs autonomy.

Mr. Speaker, I would say it is a promising start but too early to judge. Indicators suggest that Hong Kong is

fully exercising its autonomy as a separate customs territory inside China. Law enforcement cooperation between Hong Kong police and Customs and U.S. Customs remains "much the same," and, according to U.S. officials, there appears to be no change in the working relationship. Nevertheless, it is "too early to judge" whether long-term U.S. trade, security, and law enforcement interests in Hong Kong ultimately will be affected by the transition.

In November, the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service performed 30 postshipment verifications on export licenses and found only one or two questionable situations. Moreover, those questions were resolved with further inspection.

A U.S. interagency team on export controls traveled to Hong Kong on January 12, 1998, as part of a bilateral cooperation agreement between Secretary of Commerce William Daley and Hong Kong Trade and Industry Secretary Denise Yue.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to look at our entire report. We are going to more fully examine the customs and export control issue, among others, when we present our third and fourth quarterly reports to the Congress of the United States. Again, our colleagues will find our second quarterly report fully presented in the Extensions of Remarks for today.

AMERICAN HELLENIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION HONOREES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 21, 1997, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAPPAS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 2 minutes.

Mr. PAPPAS. Mr. Speaker, just a few days ago an organization of which I am a member, called the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association, or AHEPA for short, had its 33rd Biennial AHEPA Congressional Banquet not too far from here.

At that event one of our colleagues, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) was the recipient of the annual Pericles Award. The gentleman from Florida, as all of us know here, is a leader in many areas of public policy, health care being one of them, but also in areas of public policy dealing with the Mediterranean, Eastern Mediterranean, Greece, and Cyprus. Mr. Speaker, we are all very proud to congratulate the gentleman on that.

The second award recipient was Andy Athens of the Chicago area. He received the 1998 Archbishop Iakovos Humanitarian Award.

Both of these gentlemen are fine Americans. I am very, very proud to know them and to consider them friends and to be a member of the Greek-American community in the United States with them, and am very pleased to have been there with them and their families that evening.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 22 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Reverend James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

We are grateful, O loving God, for all those people who give of their time and ability by volunteering to assist others and who through their good deeds strengthen the bonds of respect one for another. On this day we praise the efforts of those who volunteer their gifts to others and whose devotion and commitment to the meaning of service has contributed to the vitality of our national life and to our community and family development. Our thoughts at this time and our prayers every day go with these good people. May we encourage their good works and may we follow the high quality of their service in our own lives. In Your name we pray, Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. TRAFICANT) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. TRAFICANT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

SPEAKER'S GAVEL USED TODAY MADE WITH CARE AND PATIENCE BY DICK DIETERLE OF MILLERSVILLE, PA

(Mr. GINGRICH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GINGRICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. Dick Dieterle. Mr. Dieterle is a retired school teacher and amateur wood worker from Millersville, Pennsylvania who can teach us all a thing or two